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Implications of Zero-Zero SRINF
for US-West German Relations

The double zero option is the most serious controversy between Washington and the Christian Democrats since the 1960s. The Kohl government accepted zero-zero SRINF only when it became convinced that Washington and the key European allies were not prepared to join it in rejecting Gorbachev's offer and that public opinion strongly favored it. But most Christian Democrats -- who long have been the firmest supporters of West German NATO membership and close ties with the US -- remain opposed to zero-zero SRINF because they believe it will single the two Germans out as a potential nuclear battlefield.

-- They particularly resent what they perceive as pressure from Washington to accept zero-zero SRINF and lack of sensitivity to German concerns on both sides of the Atlantic.

-- Christian Democratic leaders, moreover, are convinced that the US is beginning to disengage from Europe. Unless they soon receive reassurances, we would expect them to begin seek closer security cooperation with the West European Allies, particularly France.

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If an agreement actually is concluded without reassurances to Bonn that NATO is prepared to pursue follow-on negotiations on short-range nuclear systems (0-500 kilometers), this estrangement from Washington will be reinforced. Although Christian Democratic moderates -- including Kohl -- probably would seek to prevent too sharp a deterioration in relations with Washington that could provoke the US to reduce its commitment to defend Western Europe, others would be more inclined to push German interests on key economic issues, such as trade and agriculture, or on security issues, including chemical weapons and the modernization of remaining short range nuclear systems.

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The Christian Democrats probably will try to give higher priority to relations with their West European partners.

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-- A number of Christian Democratic Bundestag deputies week spoke in early June in favor of closer ties with France, and Kohl emphasized this same point on 4 June during his Bundestag statement on the government's SRINF decision.

-- Still, cooperation with the West Europeans will not be easy. Bonn differs with London and Paris as much as with Washington over the SRINF issue, and neither Ally shares the West Germans' enthusiasm for follow-on negotiations on short-range nuclear systems.

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An INF agreement would further boost the political stature of Foreign Minister Genscher, who is pushing strongly for a new phase of detente with Moscow. And the opposition Social Democrats would gain even more public support for their notion of a nuclear-weapons-free corridor in central Europe. Both Genscher's Free Democrats and the Social Democrats would join the Christian Democrats in demanding follow-on talks on short-range nuclear systems and in strongly pushing German interests on other arms control and economic issues.

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